THE HOMŒOPATHIC HUMBUG.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It would appear that the homœopaths wince under the Bedford resolutions. This morning I received the following note from Dr. Epps, which, with the short reply, I forward to you, in order that your readers may be upon their guard.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,

Bedford, June 10th, 1858.

T. HERBERT BARKER, M.D.

[COPY.]

Great Russell-street, June 8th, 1858.

SIR,—I find your name in connexion with a meeting at Bedford on the 21st of May. I find thereat certain resolutions passed unanimously. I need not designate these resolutions. Engaged in writing a history of homœopathy, which, I trust, will be, years hence, regarded as a standard work, I shall chronicle the facts illustrative of the opposition homœopathy met with; and shall try to impart a knowledge, not simply of the general character of the opposition, but by recording both the names and the status of all the parties who publicly joined in that opposition, and the modes under which that opposition took form, thereby rendering more tangible to the recognition of those who come after, the reality and special character of the opposition. To render the history perfectly truthful and just, I have felt bound—wishing to do to others what I would wish others to do to me—to try and ascertain, before recording your name as one of the units engaged in the opposition, whether or not you gave your sanction to the resolutions referred to.

Believe me, with best wishes, sincerely yours,

JOHN EPPS, M.D.

[COPY.]

Bedford, June 10th, 1858.

DEAR SIR,—In reply to your note of the 8th instant, received this morning, I beg to say that the resolutions referred to received my most hearty sanction.

I am, dear Sir, yours &c.,

Dr. John Epps.

T. HERBERT BARKER, M.D.

MEDICAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—We have now a prospect of obtaining a settlement of the long-agitated and much-hoped-for scheme of medical reform, whereby we shall have an examining board which will act on the principle that medicine and surgery are one and indivisible; whose jurisdiction will extend over the British empire, and put an end to local restrictions; and who will also be in a great measure the choice of the profession itself.

Concurrently with the near approach of so desirable a change, and when its certainty seems assured, we are surprised and astonished by the announcement of great and unexpected changes in the curricula and examinations of the two boards to which the majority of the medical practitioners of England and Wales belong. These changes, although they have been long desirable, I consider to be merely the death struggles of the Apothecaries' Hall and the Royal College of Surgeons to retain their exclusive privileges, knowing that their fate will be decided as soon as the above scheme shall become law; feeling that as they have lost the confidence of the profession, its future members will not seek their diplomas. Finding their craft in danger, they have assumed an appearance of vigour; but I feel assured their motive is too transparent to mislead the profession or the world.

These two bodies are isolated from and wholly uninfluenced by the profession. The Apothecaries' Society are a body of druggists who seek to represent, or at any rate hold the chief authority over, the majority of the practitioners in England and Wales; but their examination is the laughingstock of the scientific world, and the protection they afford to their licentiates is no greater within their jurisdiction than out of it: the rife of quackery is sufficient proof of this assertion.

From the past career and present state of the College, can we reasonably hope that it is actuated by a sincere desire for the promotion of science? I answer, No; it is a mere sham, and its only aim is the preservation of privileges. Its authorities are an exclusive and greedy oligarchy; senility or anility seem to have been necessary qualifications for examiners; they, in their wisdom reversing ordinary rules, think when physical

decay has rendered a man deaf, his understanding must be vastly improved, and that sufficient acuteness of mental perception for an examiner is only found in the man who has been warned by defective vision that his term of life has nearly expired. Perhaps these elderly gentlemen, actuated by the ambition of dying in harness, forget that when age is seen playing a part for which it is unfit, respect and pity may be changed into contempt and ridicule.

I will quote the opinion of a writer in the *London University Magazine* on the College examinations, which neither confer honour on successful, nor disgrace on unsuccessful, candidates:—"After being ushered up a long flight of stairs and into the presence of the examining board, the first scene of that solemn farce begins, when four old gentlemen, in a slovenly manner, pretend to verify the truth of a diploma, which states that 'they have *deliberately* examined Mr. —, and have found him to be fit and capable to exercise the art and science of surgery.' We will not pause to criticise the bullying tone of one, the coarse rebukes of another, the courteous bearing of a third, or the pompous pedantry of a fourth; but merely record the fact that a more unsatisfactory, unjust, and illiberal educational test is not to be found than that to which the medical student is subjected, for fifty-five minutes. It is worse than torture; it is an insult to his understanding." Can we hope that this will be improved? I believe not, whilst its present exclusive policy lasts.

We have the curious anomaly of two boards presiding over different branches of one art and science, each independent, and ignoring the existence, of the other. This must not last. They are found unfitted for their duties, and the profession must raise its voice, and no longer allow these effete bodies to obstruct the way of science with their charters and exclusive rights.

I hope that by the new measure medical men throughout this empire will be placed on an equal footing in their several ranks; and that we shall be presided over by men who will consider the interests of science and humanity, to the neglect of chartered rights and exclusive privileges, to which these bodies, considering only their own private interests, have sacrificed the weal of the profession: we may then hope to see true science advance and quackery sink into oblivion.

Hoping that you will still raise your voice and exert your power in this cause, with which your journal has always been identified,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

June, 1858.

THETA.

ESTIMATING NITRIC ACID.

[NOTE FROM DR. SHERIDAN MUSPRATT.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the last edition of Fresenius's "Quantitative Analysis," is a very serious mistake, and one which has to my knowledge led several chemists astray in estimating the quantity of nitric acid in the nitrates of commerce. At p. 275 of the above-mentioned work is the following:—"Mix the triturated compound with two to three parts of perfectly anhydrous bichloride of soda; put this mixture into a platinum crucible; weigh this with its contents; heat very gradually until the mass is in a state of fusion; cool, and weigh again. The diminution of weight gives the quantity of nitric acid originally present. The results are accurate." Fresenius, who is one of the best chemists of our time, must allude to *perfectly pure anhydrous salts*, because if the nitrate of soda, or potassa of commerce, be taken, the following are eliminated with the nitric acid: sulphuric and hydrochloric acid, and water; so that the loss sustained can give no idea of the quantity of nitric acid in the sample. Boracic being a fixed acid, expels all the mineral acids from their combinations in the heat.

I remain, Sir, yours respectfully,

College of Chemistry, Liverpool, SHERIDAN MUSPRATT, M.D., &c.,
June, 1858. Professor of Chemistry.

A STUDENT'S GRIEVANCE AT THE GLASGOW ROYAL INFIRMARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Knowing your readiness in all cases to assist students in the removal of any grievance under which they labour, I am induced to send you the following communication, which I trust you will make public through the medium of your journal.